
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Perchloroethylene Dry-Cleaning Facilities Required to Meet Federal Regulation

The Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate hazardous air pollutants that present, or may present, a threat to human health. Perchloroethylene (PERC), which is the principal solvent used in the dry-cleaning industry, is one of these hazardous air pollutants. PERC is known to cause cancer in animals and is suspected to cause cancer in humans. PERC also has other non-cancer toxic effects, further underscoring the need to minimize emissions of this hazardous air pollutant.

The use of perchloroethylene for garment cleaning has steadily increased over the past four decades. According to the International Fabric Care Institute, nationally nearly 90 percent of all dry-cleaners now use this solvent. In the northeast, almost 95 percent of the dry-cleaners use PERC. Solvent emissions occur during the actual dry-cleaning process as well as from fugitive losses. Process emissions are due to vent loss during aeration, washer venting in transfer machines, and from stills and "muck cookers." Fugitive emissions occur with the transfer of "wet" garments, filter changes, equipment leaks, spills, water separators, and residual emissions from garments after they have been taken home.

In order to limit PERC emissions from dry-cleaning facilities, EPA established National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for perchloroethylene dry cleaning facilities in 1993. All dry cleaning facilities using PERC are subject to the requirements of this regulation. The annual usage of the solvent and the type of equipment being used will dictate which of the requirements are applicable to a particular facility.

According to the State of New Hampshire Rules Governing Air Pollution, perchloroethylene emissions from a dry cleaning device may not exceed ambient air limits (AALs) set forth in Env-A 1400 Regulated Toxic Air Pollutants. If the AALs cannot be met, the dry cleaner is required to obtain a state operating permit. The EPA regulation requires these devices submit an application for a federal Title V operating permit by December 9, 2004.

If you have any questions concerning this regulation, please contact the N.H. Department of Environmental Services, Air Resources Division at (603) 271-1370.